

The information contained in this Handbook does not include all the legal requirements of an AmeriCorps grant. The Handbook is a working document which will be supplemented when necessary.

PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S HANDBOOK

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PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S HANDBOOK

I. AmeriCorps Overview

A. Overview

What is AmeriCorps?

AmeriCorps is an umbrella term that refers to programs that are designated by the Corporation as national service programs and the Members in them. In general, AmeriCorps programs will provide Members with a full-time (or in some cases, part-time) service experience, a living stipend, and an educational award from the National Service Trust Fund. AmeriCorps programs are united by four common goals:

- 1.) **Getting Things Done** through direct and demonstrable service that meets communities' education, public safety, human, and environmental needs.
- 2.) **Strengthening Communities** by bringing together Americans of all ages and backgrounds in the common effort to improve our communities.
- 3.) **Encouraging Responsibility** by encouraging Members to explore and exercise their responsibilities toward their communities, their families, and themselves.
- 4.) **Expanding Opportunity** by enhancing Members' educational opportunities, job experience, and life skills.

The name AmeriCorps refers to the entire AmeriCorps National Service Network, which includes AmeriCorps*State, AmeriCorps*National, Territory and Tribe Set Asides, AmeriCorps*VISTA, and AmeriCorps *NCCC. In 1996, more than 25,000 Americans will serve in AmeriCorps in more than 1500 sites nationwide.

B. The Grant

Where do I find all the requirements for my AmeriCorps program?

Your grant is the principle document which sets forth and incorporates all the special conditions applicable to operating your program, includes any additional approvals and restrictions, and, by reference, OMB circulars and Corporation regulations.

The grant also incorporates your proposal (application) and modifications to it that may have been negotiated with you. These documents represent your statement of work for the program you intend to implement. The grant also contains the maximum amount of funds which the Corporation has provided for your program and a budget for your program which includes your cost obligations to raise matching funds or in-kind contributions.

Who ultimately is responsible for managing your AmeriCorps program?

While the Corporation staff, State Commission, AmeriCorps*National parent organization or technical assistance providers may give you advice, thoughts, and feedback on your program, you ultimately are responsible for the direction, quality, oversight and decisions related to your program within the constraints of your grant requirements.

Since many of us are sub-grantees of the Corporation through State Commissions or National parent organizations, how will communications take place?

If you are an AmeriCorps*State program your first point of contact always should be your State Commission. If you are an AmeriCorps*National program or project site, your first point of contact always should be your parent organization. If you are an AmeriCorps*Set Aside program, your first point of contact will be your Corporation Program Officer.

There will be a multiplicity of contacts and information flows involving Corporation staff, contracted evaluators, technical assistance providers, health insurers, child care provider assistance and a great variety of information collections for such things as Member enrollments in the Trust, health and child care, completion of service, demographic data, evaluation information and so on.

Most of the information will be collected from and provided to you through your State Commission or National parent organization.

If I have a problem with my program that affects the conditions of my grant or sub-grant, to whom do I go?

In most cases AmeriCorps programs will be sub-grantees of the Corporation through a State Commission or National Direct parent organization. The organization that signs your grant or agreement is the only organization authorized to change it or provide direction thereunder. With sub-grantees, the Corporation has no contractual relationship and relies on the State Commissions and National Direct grantees to administer these grants. In turn, State Commission and National Direct parent organization grants will need to obtain Corporation approvals on grant changes.

If you have a direct grant from the Corporation, you must contact the Corporation Program Officer or Grants Officer assigned to your grant.

In what form will I receive any necessary approvals or changes?

All changes or modifications of your grant must be in writing and signed by an authorized official. The Corporation will not recognize unwritten commitments or agreements.

It is important for you to distinguish between the informal nature of communications and interactions involving assistance, advice and feedback which you may choose to accept, and the formal nature of your grant or agreement which mandates specific requirements, allowances and prohibitions.

II. AmeriCorps' National Identity

A. Overview

Why is National Identity an important element of all AmeriCorps programs?

To gain the benefits of a national program, we must work together to build a national identity beyond that of grants administration and program requirements.

What are the key components of National Identity?

The following components of national identity -- developed by a task force and refined after a year's experience -- allow for programs to maintain their important local identities while they benefit from the name recognition and positive reputation of the national AmeriCorps program.

Common Ethic-- The centerpiece of AmeriCorps' ethic is getting things done -- improving communities by meeting their education, public safety, human and environmental needs. The other key aspects of the ethic are strengthening communities and developing Members' opportunities and civic responsibility. Your application included goals in each of these areas, but it is important to reinforce this framework through orientation and training sessions, "service-learning," and special activities.

Common Application-- Programs should select AmeriCorps Members based on an application form and such interviews or references as the program deems appropriate. Programs are strongly encouraged to use the "model" AmeriCorps application, which may be supplemented with additional forms or materials.

Common Orientation-- Your staff and Member orientations should include a viewing of the AmeriCorps orientation video. The orientation should also include an explanation of how your local program fits into the AmeriCorps*National Service Network.

Common Pledge-- During the orientation, at the completion of pre-service training, or at another appropriate point, Members should be asked to take the AmeriCorps pledge or affirmation.

AmeriCorps Pledge

I will get things done for America -- to make our people safer, smarter, and healthier.

I will bring Americans together to strengthen our communities.

Faced with apathy, I will take action. Faced with conflict, I will seek common ground.

Faced with adversity, I will persevere.

I will carry this commitment with me this year and beyond.

I am an AmeriCorps Member, and I will get things done.

Common Skills-- To enhance Members' ability to carry out the responsibilities that are part of the AmeriCorps ethic, all AmeriCorps Members should be trained in three basic skills: communication, conflict resolution, and CPR/first aid.

Common Projects-- The most important common activity for AmeriCorps is service in the four national priority areas: education, public safety, human needs, and environment. However, to enhance national impact and visibility, AmeriCorps is sponsoring three common national projects: citizenship, HIV / AIDS education, and environmental audit.

Common Events-- Throughout the year, AmeriCorps Members should have opportunities to come together for special events related to their service. This will remind them that they are part of a national program, celebrate their accomplishments, and allow them to work with other AmeriCorps Members. Some events are designed to engage the broader community and leverage the work of unstipended volunteers.

Events planned for 1995-96 include:

National Opening Ceremony (October 12)

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service (January 15)

National Day of Service (April 23 -- tentative)

AmeriCorps Graduation (June - August)

Common Connections-- There will be many opportunities for representatives of different programs to share experiences and knowledge and for individuals from different parts of the country to become connected to programs outside of their home communities.

Common Language -- Consistent use of basic terms helps reinforce our common objectives and clarifies AmeriCorps' identity for the public. There are terms your staff and Members will use frequently:

- "AmeriCorps Members," not volunteers, participants, or employees.
- Your program is part of the "AmeriCorps National Service Network."
- "National recruit" refers to individuals who become an AmeriCorps Member through the national referral system, regardless of where they live.
- "National Service" refers to any Corporation-funded program, including Learn and Serve America and National Senior Service Corps, regardless of whether such programs offer stipends or educational awards. ("National service" in lower case refers to the broader field of national efforts, including those operating abroad, like the Peace Corps, and those focused on military, rather than civilian service.)
- The "service-learning" educational method helps Members learn through active participation in thoughtfully organized service.
- "Stipends" or "living allowances," not "salaries" or "wages," are paid to Members.

Common Identification-- In addition to AmeriCorps uniforms, there are many other ways in which the common look and identity may be advanced by programs:

- Members identify themselves as AmeriCorps Members and describe AmeriCorps appropriately.
- Signs identify the site as an AmeriCorps project site.
- Program staff are able to discuss AmeriCorps with visitors.
- The program office, where applicable, is appropriately identified as an AmeriCorps office, along with any local identity.
- Stationery, brochures, fax cover sheets, and newsletters identify the program as AmeriCorps, including the use of the logo.
- Community members are aware that the Members are AmeriCorps Members.
- Members have palm cards identifying them as AmeriCorps Members.
- Press reports, if any, note that the program is an AmeriCorps program.

B. Logos

What are the different names, phrases and symbols we should use to build a national identity?

Programs are encouraged to use the following names, phrases, and symbols to help build a national identity:

- AmeriCorps®
- The AmeriCorps National Service Network
- an AmeriCorps® program
- Getting Things Done™
- AmeriCorps Member
- the AmeriCorps logo

When do we use the AmeriCorps logo?

We will provide programs with a camera-ready logo that may be added to uniforms, stationery, signs, recruitment brochures, application forms, Member curriculum and orientation materials, banners, press releases and publications created by AmeriCorps Members.

What uses of the AmeriCorps logo are restricted?

In order to preserve the AmeriCorps identity, you must obtain written permission from the Corporation if you wish to:

- use the AmeriCorps name or logo on materials that will be sold;
- use the AmeriCorps name or logo on clothing not worn by Members or alumni;
- alter the AmeriCorps logo or use it as a part of any other logo or design; or
- allow a donor to use the AmeriCorps name or logo in promotional material.

May our corporate sponsors use the AmeriCorps name and logo?

Donors to local programs may not use the AmeriCorps name or logo in advertising or other promotional materials without the written permission of the Corporation.

Permission may be withheld if recognition of the donor is inconsistent with the Corporation's policies and objectives.

C. Trademarks

Are we supposed to use the trademark symbols?

When using the word **AmeriCorps** in a letter, programs should use the ® symbol following the first use of the word. On other items, such as t-shirts and hats, the same rules apply unless the symbol detracts from the appearance of the item. Programs also should use the ™ symbol following the phrase **Getting Things Done**. We have registered the AmeriCorps name, our logo and the phrase **Getting Things Done**.

How do we handle publications created by Programs?

Programs may include the AmeriCorps logo in publications, however the following acknowledgment and disclaimer must be included in materials produced for external publication:

"This material is based upon work supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service under AmeriCorps Grant No. _____. Opinions or points of view expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Corporation for National and Community Service or the AmeriCorps program."

Programs also must ensure that the publication is consistent with grant provisions limiting Member activities (for example, no lobbying or religious materials).

Programs are required to send two copies of the external publication to the Corporation's Office of Public Affairs and their granting agency (if different from the Corporation).

D. The Use of the Term "AmeriCorps"

Do we have to use the term AmeriCorps in our program name?

- The word "AmeriCorps" does not have to be included in a program's name, however it should be used on key elements of the program's uniform, literature and other materials.
- To establish your relationship to AmeriCorps, programs also should use the phrase "The AmeriCorps National Service Network" on stationery, in literature, and on other appropriate materials. The phrase "The AmeriCorps National Service Network" means the network of national service programs, including AmeriCorps* State, AmeriCorps* National, AmeriCorps* Set Asides, AmeriCorps* VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), and AmeriCorps* NCCC (the National Civilian Community Corps).
- Where "The AmeriCorps National Network" is cumbersome, you can use "an AmeriCorps program."

E. Uniforms

Will the Corporation provide uniforms to Members?

The Corporation has contracted with the Mississippi Industries for the Blind (NIB) for the warehousing and distribution of uniforms and national identity items. NIB will accept orders directly from programs and will ship from a central location.

For your AmeriCorps uniform budget, you should allocate at least \$32.00 per Member, which should have been included in your budget and should be paid directly to the supplier.

What is in the AmeriCorps Uniform Package?

Each AmeriCorps Member should be provided a core package consisting of:

Qty	Item	Cost
1	AmeriCorps t-shirt	\$5.00
1	AmeriCorps sweat jacket	\$18.00
1	AmeriCorps cap	\$5.75
1	AmeriCorps lapel pin	\$1.00
2	AmeriCorps patches (one of each type) -- Logo (round) -- Getting Things Done (bar)	\$\$.70/each
50	Business/ID cards (business cards can be laminated for use as I.D.'s)	No Charge
5	AmeriCorps decals (for hard hats, rain slickers, journals, etc.)	\$.10/each

The Corporation anticipates that this package will not exceed \$32.00 per Member.

Depending upon the nature of your service projects, you may want to purchase additional AmeriCorps uniform items such as multiple t-shirts and optional items such as work shirts, lab coats, oxford shirts and trousers. These items may be included within your grant award budget if they are specifically AmeriCorps optional uniform items, per the National Identity booklet.

What should we do if we wear local program items?

Corporation funds may be used only for official AmeriCorps uniforms and optional items: you may not include money in your budget request for a local program uniform. To the extent that you are identifying AmeriCorps on your local program uniforms, the cost of printing, decals, or patches may be included in your budget request.

There are two ways to highlight your program's local identity using the AmeriCorps national identity:

- 1.) Use AmeriCorps uniforms as base and add program identity printing (fully fundable through grant dollars).
- 2.) Use local uniform as a base and add AmeriCorps identity (only the AmeriCorps decal, patch, and cost of printing AmeriCorps and Getting Things Done fundable through grant dollars).

Are there other national identity items?

You may include up to \$1000.00 in your uniform line item budget for national identity items. Your request should not exceed one banner per operational site, 25 signs per operational site, one bag of buttons per 50 Members, one package of bumper stickers, and 2 rolls of stickers.

F. AmeriCorps Project Site Signs**Should we post AmeriCorps signs?**

The Corporation will provide 25 AmeriCorps signs per site for your program free of charge. However, you will need to order these from NIB. Because of our emphasis on “getting things done,” it is important that communities know when AmeriCorps Members are working in their local area. Programs should use the signs to designate AmeriCorps project sites whenever possible.

G. The Press**How should we handle media inquiries?**

We encourage programs to work directly with local media to highlight accomplishments. In dealing with local media, be sure to identify your program as an AmeriCorps program. Program directors must have the written consent of Members before disclosing their names or photographs to the press, or releasing personal information about them. Please coordinate outreach to the national press with the Corporation’s Office of External Affairs.

What kinds of information should I share with the Corporation?

It is important to share both good and bad news about your AmeriCorps program with the Corporation.

Too often the Corporation doesn't hear about the great stories happening in your community. Together, we need to make an extra effort to document and share good news for many reasons: stories can be written up in our newsletter so that other programs can pick up important lessons, we can better direct the press to excellent programs, and outstanding AmeriCorps Members may be invited to special events. In addition, strong programs may be targets for VIP visits, mentioned in Presidential speeches, or touted as models. It is in everyone's interest to share this information.

What is good news?

An excellent service project with demonstrable results. A good story, about a neighborhood or classroom being turned around through the program's efforts. A participant whose life is changed. A community coming together as a result of the program.

Please be sure that you mail copies of every article about your program to your CNS Program Officer. The Corporation has established an extensive clipping library in the Office of Public Affairs, which will only be as good as the information we receive from you.

What is bad news?

It is equally important that programs share with the Corporation the bad news as well as the good.

Hypothetical examples include: Members engage in lobbying or another prohibited activity. A Member is caught engaging in an illegal activity. A program comes into conflict with the community, making it impossible to achieve its mission. Drug abuse runs rampant. Participants are organizing a protest against the program. Sexual harassment or other forms of discrimination occur. A program is about to go bankrupt. A program director quits, leaving chaos in her wake. Use your imagination.

We might hear bad news through many possible sources. The programs tell us themselves (this is the best way to hear it). We find out on a site visit or by talking to participants or others. Other staff at the Corporation or our State Directors let us know. Someone calls the Inspector General's hotline. The worst way to find out is from Congress or the newspaper.

We know that problems will arise through no fault of the programs. Our goal is to try to prevent problems and to be the first to find out about any problem that occurs despite our best efforts. We need to respond immediately to correct the problem. Programs will be held accountable for not sharing this kind of information.

III. Member Recruitment and Selection

A. Eligibility

Who is eligible to enroll in AmeriCorps?

To be eligible to enroll in AmeriCorps, an individual must:

- be a U.S. citizen or U.S. national, or a lawful permanent resident alien of the U.S.;
- be at least 17 years old (or 16, in youth corps programs and programs for certain economically disadvantaged youth); and
- have a high school diploma or GED, or agree to obtain one.

B. Selection

Who selects AmeriCorps Members?

You, not the Corporation, are responsible for selecting the AmeriCorps Members who will serve in your programs. AmeriCorps Members should be selected based on an application form and such interviews, references, or additional material as the program deems appropriate.

How should we recruit and select Members?

You should make every effort to recruit from the local community and to seek a talented and diverse team of Members that fit the program's needs. This includes diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, socio-economic background, educational background, sex, age and disability.

To supplement your program's local recruitment efforts, programs are strongly encouraged to request referrals through the Corporation's national referral database and the State Commission's recruitment system. Both systems can be used to find candidates from the local community where the program is based.

C. The National Referral System

How does the national referral database work?

The Corporation maintains a database of individuals interested in becoming AmeriCorps Members. As of August 1, 1995, the national referral system included the names of 59,000 individuals. Although entries are not screened for suitability, the basic identifying information submitted by the individuals is available to assist your program's recruitment efforts. The Corporation also distributes a directory of AmeriCorps programs to individuals in the database and encourages them to contact programs directly. We ask that you respond promptly and courteously to inquiries from interested individuals.

How will the national referral system help me achieve my recruiting goal?

The national referral system can be a useful source of diverse and skilled Members from your area or around the country. Let us know which Member profiles you are seeking and the number of people you are willing to contact. For example, if the program's recruitment goal is to increase participation among residents who live near the operating project site, programs can request a list of individuals residing in areas identified by zip codes. Within one week, we will make every effort to send you a list of individuals that meet your needs. The Corporation's overall goal is to have 25% of AmeriCorps Members selected from the national referral system this year.

How do interested individuals become listed in the National Referral database?

Anyone interested in participating in AmeriCorps and entering his or her name into the national referral database should call our toll-free number, (800) 94-ACORP / (800) 942-2677 (voice) or (800) 833-3722 (T.D.D.).

D. Relocation**What resources are available to relocate Members selected from the national referral system?**

Each AmeriCorps*National program may obtain a very limited amount of funding [up to \$3,000] to pay the one-way travel costs for AmeriCorps Members who are selected from the national referral system but can't afford to move. Programs may pay actual travel costs for the individual Member or \$500, whichever is less. Although the costs of relocation may in some cases be higher than \$500, these costs cannot be reimbursed out of grant funds due to budget limitations.

State Commissions will receive an additional \$1,000 to cover the relocation costs of national recruits serving in AmeriCorps*State programs (subject to the same restrictions noted above). Again, budget constraints preclude making more generous awards for this purpose.

E. The Application Form**Do we have to use the Corporation's Member application form?**

Programs are encouraged to use the "model" AmeriCorps application, but may supplement it with additional forms or materials. Applications may be inserted into an AmeriCorps application folder, which has room for other materials, such as brochures. Contact the Corporation's Office of AmeriCorps Recruitment to order application folders and forms, available to programs free of charge. Programs must make their forms available in alternative formats for individuals with disabilities.

F. Other Selection Issues

What nondiscrimination laws apply to us?

A list of nondiscrimination laws applicable to programs receiving Federal funds is included in the Corporation's regulations (45 C.F.R. § 2540.210) and the program's grant provisions. You may not discriminate against any Member, program staff, or service recipient on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, political affiliation or disability. Under Federal law, programs are required to conduct a self-evaluation regarding accessibility for individuals with disabilities and for discrimination on the basis of sex. You must also comply with applicable State nondiscrimination laws.

What is our responsibility to accommodate Members with disabilities?

We urge you to reach out to Members who can contribute a diverse set of perceptions, skills, and life experiences to the program team. In all cases, the selection process must be based on the qualifications of the applicants and whether they can perform the essential project activities, with or without reasonable accommodation of their mental or physical disabilities. If applicants are qualified but have disabilities, you have an obligation by law and under the grant to provide reasonable accommodation to enable them to participate. You do not have to enroll someone who is unqualified or who poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others [which cannot be eliminated through reasonable accommodation], nor do you have to make accommodations which are unduly burdensome or will alter your program design fundamentally.

What if we can't afford to make the necessary accommodations for a qualified applicant with a disability?

If accommodating a qualified Member with a disability would impose an unreasonable financial or administrative burden on your program based on the factors listed in the grant provisions, program directors can document this need and contact their state commission for assistance. The Corporation has special limited funding available through State Commissions to help recruit Members with disabilities and to help pay for accommodations.

Can we enroll a former employee as a Member?

In general, programs may not select a Member who is or was employed by a prospective program sponsor within six months of the time of enrollment in the program.

Can high school students become AmeriCorps Members?

Yes, but they must meet the minimum age requirements. Because high school students may not drop out of school in order to participate, they are limited to participation in part-time programs. If they are under 18, programs must get the parent's or legal guardian's written consent for membership. AmeriCorps Members must be at least 17 years of age at the time of enrollment (or at least 16 years of age if the Member is a participant in a youth corps or a program for certain disadvantaged individuals).

Can we accept someone with a criminal or juvenile record?

Because the eligibility of individuals with criminal records has not been restricted, programs must make case-by-case determinations. However, if your program provides service in particularly sensitive areas, such as working with young children, you should consider whether the participation of individuals with certain criminal backgrounds would have a significant negative impact on the physical or psychological health of either Members or individuals served. Similarly, programs should consider carefully the impact of participation by an individual convicted of a violent felony or an offense related to the project activities (for example, someone with a burglary record where the program repairs the homes of elderly residents). The same recommendations apply for someone adjudicated as a juvenile offender.

Programs should be aware that some states have laws related to placing individuals with criminal records in activities involving children. Programs could be held liable for any negative consequences resulting from inadequate screening of Members in particularly sensitive areas. This also could affect a program's ability to obtain appropriate liability protection.

G. Length of Service**What is the minimum service requirement for AmeriCorps Members?**

The term of service must be defined as including at least 1,700 hours of participation over a period of 9 to 12 months for full-time Members, and at least 900 hours over a period of up to 2 years (or up to 3 years if the Member is attending a qualified institution of higher education) for part-time Members. Holidays, leave time and other absences may not be counted toward service hours, but should be included in the programmatic year.

What must an AmeriCorps Member do to earn an educational benefit?

The Member must not only complete the minimum number of hours for full-time or part-time, but also must meet the performance standards established by the program. In addition, the Member must serve for the duration of the service program as established. For example, if a program is an 11 month program with a minimum of 1,800 hours, the Member is required to meet those objectives before being certified as eligible for the educational award. Such requirements must be delineated in the Member contract.

Can full-time Members be converted to part-time Members?

With the approval of the Corporation, a program may convert full-time slots to part-time slots, while ensuring that the replacement AmeriCorps Member serves at least 900 hours.

Members' terms of service must be defined in the written Member contract. Programs must provide these to Members upon their acceptance into the program.

Can a Member serve a second term?

Yes, but you are under no obligation to enroll someone for a second term. To be eligible for a second term, a Member must receive a satisfactory performance review for his/her first term of service. Please note that one full-time and one part-time term of service count as two terms.

Corporation funds and educational awards may not be used to support a Member who seeks to enroll for a third term.

Can we have shorter service programs, especially in the summer?

Under special circumstances, grantees may, with the Corporation's prior approval, implement a shortened, part-time program (i.e. less than 900 service hours) for a concentrated period such as summer. These shorter programs must require Members to serve full-time or close to full-time for the stipulated period. In no case will the Corporation support a shortened program under which Members would serve just a few hours a week over an extended period without a concentrated full-time period of service. Beginning with the 1996 grant application, grantees may request such shortened programs specifically as a component of their new or renewal proposal, or may submit a separate application especially for this type of shorter program.

H. Replacing Members**Do the Members have to complete a full term of service?**

Yes. Members are expected to complete their full term of service.

What if a program loses a Member?

A program that loses AmeriCorps Members between classes has the option of filling the vacated slots at any time, however, the Corporation specifically discourages this kind of rolling admissions and programs are encouraged to fill empty slots at the start of the next term of service. One reason empty AmeriCorps slots should be filled in January, June or September classes is that programs must provide the same comprehensive training and orientation to replacement AmeriCorps Members as was provided to Members of the first class. It would be considerably less burdensome and more cost-effective, then, for programs to bring on and train replacement Members at the same time.

Should a program not be renewed, Members who were scheduled to continue in their term of service may be placed in other programs if feasible, or can receive a pro-rated educational award if he or she completes at least 15% of the necessary hours.

I. Transferring to Another Program

Can a Member transfer hours from one program to another?

Yes, with certain restrictions a program may grant a Member permission to transfer to another AmeriCorps*State or AmeriCorps*National program. The Member must apply to and be accepted by Program B, which must have an available slot in the incoming class since the “position” itself cannot move to the new program. In such a transfer, no funds are transferred from Program A to Program B. The Director of Program A must submit a Change of Status/Term Form to the Corporation, and send a copy both to the Program B Director and to the Member. A new Change of Status/Term Form is not necessary.

J. Returning to a Program

Can a Member return to a program after an extended absence?

You may grant permission for a Member to leave your program for a “compelling personal circumstance,” where he/she intends to complete the term of service within two years with the same or different AmeriCorps program. Such a Member is known as a Returning Member. Upon leaving Program X, the Director submits a Change of Status/Term Form.

When applying to another program after an extended absence, the Member provides the Program Y Director with a copy of the Change Form indicating previous service in Program X. If the Member is accepted, a new Change of Status Form is submitted by Program Y, which reinstates the Member and transfers the hours.

IV. Member Training And Supervision

A. Overview

What is an “AmeriCorps Member?”

An “AmeriCorps Member”—as opposed to a “participant” or “volunteer”—is our term for individuals who serve in any of the programs that make up the AmeriCorps National Service Network—AmeriCorps*State, AmeriCorps*National, AmeriCorps*Set Aside, AmeriCorps*VISTA, or AmeriCorps*NCCC—and are eligible to receive an educational award from the National Service Trust. We use the term to help AmeriCorps Members recognize that they are a part of a larger movement, and to feel connected to other Members across the country.

What should we do to prepare for AmeriCorps Members?

You should prepare a Member contract, a code of conduct, and orientation and training plans. Consult with your Members on an ongoing basis, particularly as you develop project activities, Member roles, codes of conduct, and training plans. In planning your program year, build enough flexibility into the schedule to account for holidays and other time off, and to give each Member the opportunity to make up missed hours. Members should be able to complete the minimum number of hours defined in your Member contract (at least 1700 hours for a full-time Member or 900 hours for a part-time Member) and the additional program requirements needed to qualify for the educational award.

B. Orientation

What core topics should be included in an initial Member orientation?

Orientation of new AmeriCorps Members should accomplish at least three objectives:

- To reinforce in Members the AmeriCorps ethic, as elaborated in the Member Handbook and orientation video;
- The importance of getting things done;
- The meaning of community;
- The doors of opportunity that will open through service; and
- The responsibilities that individuals have to themselves, their families, their community, and the Nation.

To start training Members for their assigned service activities. This includes skills training, background information about the community or natural environment, cross-cultural sensitivity, and other project-specific training.

To give new Members specific information about your program rules. To this end, you must cover Member rights and responsibilities, including the program's code of conduct and safety protocol, prohibited activities, requirements under the Drug Free Workplace Act, sexual harassment and other nondiscrimination issues, suspension and release from service, and grievance procedures. This also is the time to provide information about AmeriCorps benefits, living allowance information, and information about the program's time sheet, travel, expense reimbursement, and similar operating policies.

This is a good time to help Members locate themselves in "space" and "time." Members should be oriented to the AmeriCorps network of 438 programs and 25,000 Members, and should learn something about the history of service in America. You also may choose to discuss citizenship and the responsibilities inherent in it, as well as register eligible Members to vote. Initial Member orientation also would be an appropriate time to show the AmeriCorps orientation video, to pass out the Member handbook, and to stress the goals of the program. You also may mention the names of other AmeriCorps programs in your area.

Other basic information you will want to share with Members includes: the living allowance, child and health care policies, the educational award, and the program's expectations for a successful completion of a term of service. This also is the time to have Members fill out enrollment and National Service Trust forms and to introduce Members to one another and help them become a team.

C. Additional Member Training

What other training requirements must we meet?

Programs are required to provide Members with the training, skills and knowledge they need to perform well in their assigned service project. Training should be an ongoing part of your program, and you should use service experiences to help Members improve their skills, internalize project goals and increase their insight.

In addition, programs must train Members in three basic skills: communication, conflict resolution, and CPR/First Aid.

How much of the required participation can be spent in training?

Programs as a whole must allocate at least 80% of the required participation to direct service activities and no more than 20% of the required service hours to education, training and other non-direct service activities. Because the rule applies to programs as a whole and not to individuals, there can be differences among Members in how much time is spent in non-direct service activities.

D. Member Contracts

Is a program required to have a Member contract?

Yes. Programs must have Members sign a Member contract.

What should we include in the Member contract?

Although you can refer to the sample contract provided by the Corporation, each Member contract should be tailored to meet the specifications of your individual program. The contract should lay out the Member's rights and responsibilities, including:

- the start and end dates of the Member's term of service;
- the minimum number of hours and other requirements, as dictated by the program, necessary to obtain a post-service educational award;
- the name of the Member's supervisor;
- the project assignment and service activities;
- activity performance standards;
- the living allowance amount and how the Member will be paid;
- a description of the other benefits to which the Member is entitled;
- acceptable conduct;
- prohibited activities;
- requirements under the Drug Free Workplace Act;
- termination and suspension rules (including the specific circumstances under which a Member can be released for cause); and
- grievance procedures.

What are our responsibilities on Member confidentiality?

You must keep information about individual Members confidential. To protect the program, you must obtain the prior written consent of all Members before using their names, photographs, and other identifying information for publicity or promotional purposes. If you have a Member under 18 years of age, you must obtain written consent from a parent or legal guardian. The easiest way to handle this is to include a standard "informed consent form" as a part of the Member contract which Members sign upon enrollment. Programs may release aggregate and other non-identifying information about Members

You must release Member information to the granting agency, the Corporation and authorized program evaluators.

What does the Drug Free Workplace Act require?

The Drug Free Workplace Act outlined in your grant provisions and the Corporation regulations as set forth in 45 C.F.R. part 2542 requires you to give a notice about the Act to your employees and Members, and to conduct a drug free awareness program. If one of your employees or Members is arrested for or convicted of a drug offense, he or she must notify you in writing within 5 days, and you must take appropriate action (including suspension and referral to a drug rehabilitation program, or release for cause consistent with the Corporation's rules on termination and suspension of service). You must report the conviction in writing within 10 days to your AmeriCorps*State or AmeriCorps*National parent organization, as appropriate (after which the Corporation must be notified in writing). If program directors do not comply with this law, grants are subject to suspension, termination or debarment proceedings.

E. Voting**May Members organize voter registration drives?**

No. Programs may not use Corporation funds to conduct voter registration drives. Furthermore, the Corporation does not recognize voter registration drives as an acceptable service activity for AmeriCorps Members. Even non-partisan voter registration efforts are prohibited.

Can programs give Members time off to register to vote?

Programs should encourage Members to register to vote by allowing them to register during their service hours. Programs also can provide Members with transportation to and from the voter registration office. The time spent on registering to vote can be counted as part of the 20% of non-direct service hours.

Must we make sure that Members register to vote?

AmeriCorps aims to help Members develop the skills needed for active, strong citizenship, and a program should make no attempt to influence how he or she votes. You must encourage every eligible Member to register to vote before finishing a term of service, however, whether an individual exercises his or her right to vote is a personal decision.

Can Members have time-off during their service hours to vote?

Members who are unable to vote before or after service hours should be allowed to do so during their service time without incurring any penalties. The length of absence should be determined by the site director. For example, many Federal, State and private sector employers allow their employees to take leave with pay for up to three hours after the polls open or three hours before they close, whichever leads to less time off from work, to enable them to vote in person.

F. Jury Duty

May Members have time-off for jury duty?

To strengthen the spirit of citizenship among Members, serving on a jury is an important responsibility of citizenship. Accordingly, Members should be encouraged to serve jury duty and should not be penalized for doing so. During the time Members serve as jurors, they should continue to accrue their normal service hours, and to receive their living allowance and health benefits. They may also keep reimbursements for incidental expenses received from the court. The average length of jury service is three to four days.

G. Prohibited Activities

What program activities are prohibited?

A number of activities are off-limits to Members during program time. Programs must become familiar with the specific prohibitions described in the Corporation's formal regulations (45 C.F.R. §2520.30) and the grant provisions. The list of prohibited activities includes:

- efforts to influence legislation, including lobbying for your AmeriCorps program
- organizing protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes
- assisting or deterring union organizing
- impairing existing contracts or collective bargaining agreements
- engaging in partisan or election politics
- religious activities
- activities that pose a significant safety risk to participants
- assignments that displace employees
- providing assistance to a business organized for profit

Can programs ask Members to pick up some of the responsibilities of an employee temporarily?

No. Programs may not permit a Member to fill in for an absent employee. By law, Members may not under any circumstances perform services, duties or activities that were assigned to an employee or to an employee who recently resigned or was discharged. Programs may not use a Member in a way that will displace an employee or position, or infringe on an employee's promotional opportunities.

A detailed list of prohibitions related to employee displacement is included in the Corporation's regulations (45 C.F.R. §2540.100) and your grant provisions.

May we encourage or advocate lobbying by Members in an internal newsletter, Corporation-funded publication, or AmeriCorps publication, whether or not funded by the Corporation?

No. Any program activity or communication that advocates lobbying is improper.

May Members participate in lobbying or advocacy activities during service hours?

No. Members may not engage in activities that create the appearance of political activities during service hours.

Examples of unlawful political activity include, but are not limited to, the following:

- organizing a letter-writing campaign to Congress;
- printing politically charged articles in a Corporation-funded newsletter;
- taking part in political demonstrations or rallies;
- advocating for changes in State or Local laws, including State or local ballot initiatives; and
- other advocacy activities related to protests, petitions, boycotts or strikes.

However, AmeriCorps Members, like any other private citizen, may participate in lobbying or advocacy activities on their own time, at their own expense, and at their own initiative. Members may not wear an AmeriCorps uniform in such instances.

Likewise, a program that uses its own funds, totally separate and apart from Corporation funds or its match requirements, may on its own decide to lobby, so long as it does not use Members' hours or service, the AmeriCorps logo, stationary, uniforms, or other like resource. Such programs may lobby only to the extent that such activities are permitted by 26 U.S.C. section 501(c)(3).

May AmeriCorps*State or AmeriCorps*National Members engage in fundraising activities?

Overall, AmeriCorps Members cannot assist their organizations with major fund raising efforts. However, Corporation policy permits some activities related to fundraising by AmeriCorps Members to the extent that such activities “are in support of a direct service,” and provided that they are not the program’s primary activity.

AmeriCorps Members may receive direct service credit hours for activities related to fund raising only to the extent that those activities satisfy all four of the following:

- provide immediate and direct support to a specific and direct service activity;
- fall within the program’s approved direct service objectives;
- are not the primary activity of the program; and
- do not involve significant amounts of time for any Member.

Examples of permissible Member activities:

- soliciting several cans of paint from a store near a work site to meet an unanticipated need.
- organizing an occasional "serve-a-thon" in which Members recruit individuals to obtain sponsors in advance of an approved direct service event.

Examples of Member activities that are not permissible:

- preparing a grant proposal (or performing other fundraising functions) to help the grantee achieve its matching requirements or to pay an organization's general operating expenses.

- providing fundraising assistance to other community-based organizations that do not provide an immediate and direct support to a grantee's approved direct service activity.

Can Members be placed into internships with for-profit businesses as part of the education and training component of the program?

AmeriCorps Members may not be placed into such internships.

H. Member Safety

What safety precautions should we take to protect Members?

Programs must have appropriate safeguards in place to ensure the safety of Members. Further, Members may not participate in projects or undertake service activities that pose a significant safety risk.

Does the Corporation have a specific safety protocol programs must follow?

No, but the Corporation's "Member Safety Protocol" requires programs to establish appropriate policies related to the supervision of Members, and mandates specific training (such as the proper use of power tools) to minimize risks to Members. In addition, the Protocol specifically prohibits programs from placing Members in situations where they will have contact with criminal offenders, witness crimes, get involved in the arrest process, or handle legal evidence.

What liability coverage do we need?

Programs must have sufficient liability insurance to protect the organization, employees, and Members. Members engaged in both on- and off-site project activities must be covered. You should review your current policies to assure they cover non-employees in special statuses, such as Members. Programs should decide how much liability coverage is sufficient, given the specific risk factors the program presents. General liability insurance is an administrative cost which can be charged against the grant (subject to your grant's administrative cost limit) or included in the program's match. If it is included in the approved budget, insurance purchased specifically to cover Member liability can be charged as a direct program cost.

I. Member Release and Grievance

What if a Member wants to leave the program?

Programs may release Members for:

- (1) compelling personal circumstances, and
- (2) cause.

What are the parameters of releasing a Member for a compelling personal reason?

If a Member wants to leave the program, you have the authority to determine whether his or her reason for dropping out is a “compelling personal circumstance.” For example, a Program Director may decide that a Member’s illness or a critical family matter justifies a release (or a suspension) for compelling personal circumstances. Reasons such as dissatisfaction with assignments, the desire to return to school, to move to another part of the country, or to take a job, however, would not justify such a release ordinarily. Program Directors must review the detailed procedures specified in the Corporation’s regulations (45 C.F.R. §2522.230) and the grant provisions carefully since they affect a Member’s eligibility for an educational award. You must notify your granting agency, the National Service Trust, and the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) immediately if you release a Member either for compelling personal circumstances or for cause.

What are the consequences of releasing a Member for compelling personal circumstances?

If a Member is released for compelling personal circumstances, you may either:

- (1) authorize a prorated educational award (if the Member has served at least 15% of his or her term of service); or
- (2) permit the Member to suspend the term of service for up to two years.

When are we required to release a Member for cause?

Programs must release a Member for cause if he or she, among other things, drops out without obtaining a release for compelling personal circumstances or is convicted of a felony or the sale or distribution of a controlled substance during a term of service. Please review the Corporation’s regulation (45 C.F.R. §2522.230) for a more detailed discussion on releasing a Member for cause. This requirement does not preclude the program from developing other reasons to dismiss a Member for cause.

What are the consequences of releasing a Member for cause due to reasons relating to the Member’s conduct?

Releasing a Member for cause has several consequences: (1) the Member will not get any educational award based on the time served in your program; (2) the Member is disqualified from future service through AmeriCorps; and (3) the Corporation will not pay any interest that accrued if the Member had obtained a loan forbearance.

May we release a Member for cause based on grounds other than those set forth in the Corporation’s regulations?

Yes, but you must articulate the grounds ahead of time in the Member contract. Examples of conduct which programs may decide are grounds for release for cause include chronic truancy, consistent failure to follow directions, and failure to follow program rules and guidelines.

What if a Member is charged with a crime during a term of service?

If a Member is charged officially with a violent felony (such as a rape or homicide) or the sale or distribution of a controlled substance, you must suspend him or her without a living allowance and without receiving credit for missed hours. This is a minimum requirement. He or she may resume service if found not guilty or if the charge is dropped. If convicted, he or she must be released for cause.

What if a Member is convicted for possession of a controlled substance?

You must suspend him or her without a living allowance and without receiving credit for hours missed. If convicted of a first offense, the Member may resume service by enrolling in an approved drug rehabilitation program. If convicted of a second or third offense, the Member may resume service only upon successfully completing a rehabilitation program.

Must we establish grievance procedures?

Yes. In the event that informal efforts to resolve disputes are unsuccessful, Members, labor unions and other interested individuals may seek resolution through a grievance procedure. AmeriCorps grievance procedures may include an optional component, alternative dispute resolution. The procedures must include a hearing and, if necessary, binding arbitration.

What grievance procedures must we establish?

The grievance procedure requirements are detailed in your grant provisions and in our regulations (45 C.F.R. §2540.230), and are summarized only briefly here. Specific provisions related to time limits, selection of an arbitrator and costs are included in those documents.

By law, your program must set up a grievance procedure, including a hearing and binding arbitration, for Members, labor organizations and other interested parties such as AmeriCorps Member applicants.

The Corporation has drafted a Model Grievance Procedure for program use. We encourage you to establish an informal alternate dispute resolution process, such as mediation.

The grievance procedure is not designed to address all issues. Allegations of fraud or criminal activity in the program must be reported immediately to the Corporation's Inspector General. Allegations of discrimination should be directed in writing to the Corporation's Office of Equal Opportunity.

What happens when a Member files a grievance contesting a release for cause?

Should a Member file a grievance, you have the option of suspending his or her service while the grievance is pending. If the grievance is resolved in the Member's favor, you must reinstate the Member, paying him or her any withheld living allowance and crediting him or her with any missed service hours. The Corporation retains the discretion to decide whether Corporation funds should be used to pay the withheld living allowance during a Member's suspension. However, if a Member is suspended because of the pendency of criminal charges in court, the fact that the charges ultimately are dropped will not result in the Member receiving withheld living allowance or credit for missed service hours. In that event, the suspension is proper due to formal criminal charges in court.

Are there rules to follow for grievance hearings?

By law, programs must provide an opportunity for a grievance hearing, provided that a request is made within one year of the matter at issue. Hearings must be held no later than 30 calendar days after the filing of the grievance, and a decision must be made no later than 60 calendar days after filing. Hearings must be conducted by a person who has not participated in any previous decisions concerning the issue in dispute.

What are the rules we must follow in binding arbitration?

By law, programs must provide an opportunity for binding arbitration in the event a grievance hearing decision is adverse to the aggrieved party or if no decision is made within 60 days of the filing of the grievance. The arbitrator must be independent and selected by agreement of the parties. If the parties cannot agree on an arbitrator, the Corporation's Chief Executive Officer will appoint one within 15 calendar days after receiving a request from one of the parties.

An arbitration proceeding must be held no later than 45 calendar days after the request for arbitration, or no later than 30 calendar days after the appointment of an arbitrator by the Corporation's CEO. An arbitration decision must be made no later than 30 calendar days after the commencement of the arbitration proceeding.

The cost of arbitration must be divided evenly between the parties, unless the aggrieved party prevails, in which case the program must pay the total cost of the proceeding as well as the prevailing party's attorneys fees. A law suit to enforce an arbitration award may be brought in any Federal district court having jurisdiction over the parties.

J. Time Off for Service in the Armed Forces Reserves

Can we give AmeriCorps Members time off for service in the armed forces reserves?

Yes. Generally, the Reserves of the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Coast Guard, the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard require reservists to serve one week-end a month plus 12 to 15 days a year (hereafter referred to as the two-week active duty service). To the extent possible, grantees should seek to minimize the disruption in Members' AmeriCorps service as a result of discharging responsibilities related to their reservist duties. If Members have a choice of when to fulfill their annual two-week active duty requirement, they should do so when it will not disrupt their AmeriCorps service. In instances where the dates of active duty are inflexible and conflict with AmeriCorps service, Members should be granted a leave of absence for the two-week period of active duty service in the Reserves. Members may not receive time-off for additional Reserves-related service beyond the two-week active duty service. No AmeriCorps service credit is earned for the once-a-month week-end service in the Reserves.

Should AmeriCorps Members serving in the Reserves receive AmeriCorps service credit for their two-weeks of active duty?

Yes. Grantees should credit Members for AmeriCorps service hours during their two weeks of active duty service in the Reserves if it occurs during their AmeriCorps service. The Member would receive credit for the number of hours he or she would have served during that period had there been no interruption. For example, if a full-time Member is signed up to serve 30 hours of AmeriCorps service one week and 40 hours of AmeriCorps service on the following week, she or he would receive 70 hours of AmeriCorps service credit for the two weeks of active duty service regardless of the actual number of hours served in the Reserves.

Should AmeriCorps Members continue to receive their living allowance while they are completing their two-weeks of active duty service in the Reserves?

Yes. Grantees should continue to pay the living allowance and provide health care and child care coverage for the two-week period of active duty. Reservists in the U.S. Armed Forces also receive compensation from the Armed Forces for their mandatory two-weeks of active duty service. The compensation regulations governing the Army and Air National Guard may vary by state.

V. Living Allowances And Other Member Benefits

A. The Living Allowance

Is a living allowance a requirement of the grant?

The National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended, requires an AmeriCorps program to provide its full time Members with a living allowance "in an amount equal to or greater than the average annual subsistence allowance provided to VISTA volunteers..." 42 U.S. C. 1259(a)(1). The living allowance is designed to help the Member meet the necessary living expenses incurred while he or she is participating in the AmeriCorps program.

Generally, all full-time Members must receive a living allowance between \$7945 and \$15,890. The Corporation will fund only 85% of the minimum living allowance amount, or \$6753 per full-time Member. Programs that want to provide a living allowance in excess of \$7945 must provide a grantee match for all funds over \$6753. For example, a program desiring to provide an \$8000 living allowance to its Members would have to provide a \$1247 match if it requested the maximum Corporation match of \$6753. Note that this \$1247 match must come from non-Federal sources, **unless exempt under 42 U.S. C. 12571 (b).** Programs in existence prior to September 21, 1993 may offer a lower living allowance than the minimum, but Corporation funds will support only 85% of the **actual** amount.

Programs which choose to pay a living allowance to part-time Members may do so at a pro-rated level. The Corporation will fund 85% of the requested amount up to the prorated minimum required amount.

B. Member Classification

Are Members employees?

No. The definition of "participant" in the National and Community Service Act of 1990 as amended applies to what we term "AmeriCorps Members." As such, "a participant (Member) shall not be considered to be an employee of the program in which the participant (Member) is enrolled." Moreover, Members are not allowed to perform an employee's duties or otherwise displace employees.

Can we treat Members as independent contractors?

No. They are enrolled in your program to perform direct community service. Programs are responsible for training and supervising Members, for assigning service activities, for supporting and evaluating performance, for safeguarding safety, and for providing liability coverage.

C. Documentation

What documentation must we keep on Members ?

You must be able to show in an audit that every Member was eligible to enroll in AmeriCorps and to receive in-service and post-service benefits. We will ask you to certify each Member's enrollment and completion of a term of service. Your records must show that a Member completed the term of service required in his or her contract (a minimum of 1700 hours if he or she is enrolled full-time and 900 hours if he or she is enrolled part-time).

To document eligibility, you should keep records on each Member's citizenship or lawful permanent resident status, birth date, level of education, date of high school diploma or GED certificate, Member start and end dates, hours of service (supported by time and attendance records), location of service activities, and project assignment. You also should keep Member official service files, including his or her application form, position description and performance evaluations. In addition, you are required to keep demographic and other information on Members for use in program evaluations.

D. Payroll

May we pay Members hourly?

You should not pay a living allowance on an hourly basis. It is not a wage and should not fluctuate based on the number of hours Members serve in a given time period. You should pay the living allowance in increments, such as weekly or bi-weekly.

Can we use our payroll system to pay living allowances?

While you may use your payroll system to process Members' living allowances, the amount of the living allowance should not vary based on the number of hours of service performed during any given payroll period. In other words, if an AmeriCorps Member normally serves 40 hours one week and only 30 hours the next, he or she should receive the same amount of living allowance per week.

E. Taxes

What payroll taxes do we pay?

Most programs are required to pay FICA. Under Federal law, the FICA payment rate is 15.3% of the living allowance. Half (7.65%) is paid by the program and half is deducted from the Member's living allowance. FICA payments cover Social Security and Medicare benefits. **The Corporation may pay up to 85% of a program's FICA expense.**

Should we pay worker's compensation taxes?

It depends upon your State law. If Members are covered by worker's compensation, then the cost of the coverage should be included in your approved grant budget. If you do not pay worker's compensation benefits, you must obtain Occupational Accidental Death and Dismemberment [ADD] coverage for Members. Programs may need to supplement their liability coverage for incidents that occur while a Member is performing his or her service.

Should we pay unemployment insurance taxes?

The U.S. Department of Labor issued a favorable ruling which agrees with the Corporation's position: Federal unemployment compensation law does not cover Members because no employer-employee relationship exists. However, each State may continue to mandate unemployment coverage for Members under its own law, and programs are responsible for finding out what State law requires via their State Commission, legal counsel, or the applicable State agency. Programs may charge up to 85% of the program's share of unemployment insurance taxes against the grant if it is included in the approved budget.

Do we have to withhold income taxes?

Under Federal tax laws, ordinary income tax rules apply to Member benefits. A living allowance is taxable as "compensation for services" and generally is subject to Federal withholding. Room and board also may count as income subject to withholding, even though the Members are not receiving cash. Low-income Members may be able to claim an exemption from withholding if (1) they had no tax liability in the previous year, and (2) they expect to have no tax liability in the current year. State income tax withholding laws also apply.

Like all personal income taxes, taxes on the living allowance are the responsibility of the individual Member. You should have Members complete a W-4 form at the start of the term of service, with the help of your personnel officer. At the end of the tax year, programs must provide Members with a W-2 form.

F. The Impact Of The Benefits**What is the effect of a living allowance on a Member's work study and other student assistance?**

Work-study is a Federal need-based program administered through post-secondary institutions to provide students with part-time employment while they go to school. By law, a Member's living allowance does not affect work-study eligibility or eligibility for any other Federal student aid. While financial aid officers have been asked not to take the living allowance into account in determining State aid or private scholarships, programs cannot look to Federal law to ensure this.

What is the effect of a living allowance on a Member's AFDC, Food Stamps, and other need-based programs?

A Member's living allowance may affect his or her eligibility for need-based programs funded under the Social Security Act, such as AFDC, Supplemental Security Income, and Medicaid. A Member's living allowance *does not* affect his or her eligibility for all other Federal need-based programs, such as Food Stamps, Section 8 housing, and public housing.

May Members who might lose Federal Assistance waive the living allowance?

Yes. For AmeriCorps Members who fear losing that assistance because of the living allowance, the Member may waive the Living Allowance, with the following caveats. First, the Member must understand that each State has different regulations applying HHS rules, and that even if the Member waives his or her right to receive the living allowance, the State may still consider the amount of the living allowance that the Member is eligible to receive. Second, the Member may revoke the waiver at any time during the course of the program. Finally, if the Member revokes the waiver, he or she may begin receiving the living allowance only from the date on which the waiver was revoked: the Member may not receive any portion of the living allowance that accrued during the waiver period.

Are Members entitled to leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)?

Yes, provided they meet the same requirements that an employee would be required to meet. Specifically, to be eligible a Member must have provided service for at least 12 months and have completed 1250 service hours. Private nonprofit entities with fewer than 50 employees may not be subject to the FMLA. Details on the Act are available from the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division.

Can Members have their existing student loan payments deferred during service?

Members can ask their lenders to defer or forebear payments on certain qualified loans during their term of service. Interest continues to accrue during the term of service. If the Member obtains deferment or forbearance and successfully completes the term of service, the Corporation will pay the interest. The Corporation will pay a pro-rated portion of the interest that accrues for a Member who successfully completes a part-time term of service. This is a benefit to Members above and beyond the post-service educational benefit.

If a Grantee is going to use an existing health care policy that charges more than \$150 per month per Member to the Corporation, a copy of the policy along with a summary of its coverage and costs must be sent to the Corporation's Grants Office. Grantees with a National Association of Service Conservation Corps (NASCC) policy at the time of their application for the AmeriCorps Grant only need to notify the Grants Office.

G. Health Care

What health care coverage must programs provide to Members?

You must provide health care coverage to all full-time Members who do not have adequate health care coverage at the time of enrollment or who lose coverage due to participation in the program. In addition, programs must provide health care coverage if a full-time Member loses coverage during the term of service through no deliberate act of his or her own, such as parental or spousal job loss. If programs already carry minimum benefits as defined below and at a reasonable cost, they may use existing policies to cover Members. If a Grantee is going to use an existing health care policy that charges more than \$150 per month per Member to the Corporation, a copy of the policy along with a summary of its coverage and costs must be sent to the Corporation's Grants Office. **The Corporation will not cover health care costs for family members.**

If you do not have a current policy that carries the minimum health care benefits, using the alternative health care policy administered by SRC/Allianz for AmeriCorps Members is required. The Corporation will pay up to 85% of the premium costs if those costs are included in the approved grant budget.

What is the alternative health policy?

The alternative health policy is an insurance arrangement that was developed specifically to ensure that all Members be provided with a basic health plan. It is backed by Allianz Life Insurance Company and administered by SRC in Columbia, SC.

What are the minimum health care benefits programs must provide?

At a minimum, your policy must cover the services described in the grant application packet. These services are:

- physician services for illness or injury
- hospital room and board
- emergency room care
- x-ray and laboratory costs
- prescription drugs
- mental or nervous conditions (may be limited)
- substance abuse (may be limited)

In addition, your policy must include the following minimum features:

- an annual deductible of not more than \$250 per individual;

- a co-pay requirement of not more than 20% or a comparable fixed fee;
- an out-of-pocket expenditure of not more than \$1,000 per individual; and
- at least a \$50,000 maximum benefit.

Should we provide health care insurance to part-time Members?

You may choose to cover part-time Members, however you may not use any Corporation funds to help pay for any portion of the cost.

Should we provide health care insurance to part-time Members who are serving in a full-time capacity for a sustained period of time (such as a summer or full-time for 900 hours)?

Yes. The Corporation will pay up to 85% of the health care premium costs if those costs are approved in the grant and are included in the budget.

Do we have to provide health care insurance to Members on Medicaid?

Yes. You must provide health care coverage to all full-time Members, even if they are eligible for Medicaid. The Department of Health and Human Services has taken the position that Members receiving Medicaid have coverage available to them through the AmeriCorps program. Because Medicaid “wraps around” other available health care coverage, Medicaid will pick up only those costs which are not covered under the AmeriCorps policy. Members who remain on AFDC will continue to receive Medicaid for their dependents. Members who lose AFDC due to the living allowance usually can continue to receive extended Medicaid coverage for their dependents for up to one year. Program applicants should consult with their caseworkers before enrolling in AmeriCorps.

H. Child Care**What child care benefits are available to Members?**

AmeriCorps®CARE child care benefits are administered through the office of NACCRRA.

Eligible full-time AmeriCorps Members may have a child care subsidy while they are participating in national service. In order to receive the subsidy, the Member's family must be income-eligible and the child(ren)'s caregiver must be considered a legal provider in the state. AmeriCorps will pay 100% of the current market rate of child care costs for eligible Members who select qualified child care providers. Reimbursement rates and eligibility will be based on locally established guidelines under the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), a Federally-funded program administered by each state.

Parents are responsible for all registration fees upon the child(ren)'s acceptance or enrollment into the care program, and for any late fees incurred.

What is a qualified child care provider and how much can the provider charge?

To qualify for payment through AmeriCorps®CARE, a child care provider must qualify as a legal provider under the CCDBG State plan. Each State has its own approval criteria. Payments will not be made to ineligible providers.

You may contact AmeriCorps®CARE for technical assistance in determining Member eligibility, provider eligibility and child care allowance by calling 1-800-570-4543 from 9:00 am to 5:00 PM EST.

Who is eligible for child care benefits?

Full-time AmeriCorps Members are eligible for child care benefits if they: (1) are parents or custodians of dependents under 13 years of age who reside with them, (2) need child care in order to participate, and (3) have a family income that does not exceed the state's income eligibility guidelines (e.g. no more than 75% of the state's median income). This is the eligibility standard set by the CCDBG. Members are not eligible to receive child care from AmeriCorps while they are receiving other child care subsidies.

Who determines Member eligibility for child care benefits?

As Program Directors, you are responsible for determining Member eligibility based on the State established guidelines at the time a Member requests child care.

AmeriCorps®CARE will assist program directors in understanding their State guidelines on eligibility, and will provide programs with additional information during national training, or as requested.

What if a Member can not find qualified child care?

AmeriCorps®CARE will consult with Members on child care placements and work with the community to find adequate child care.

What are my responsibilities with respect to child care?

In addition to determining Member eligibility at the start of the Member's service, you are required by the conditions of their grant or sub-grant to notify AmeriCorps®CARE immediately in writing when:

- a Member is no longer eligible for child care benefits due to a change in the Member's eligibility for child care (e.g., family income exceeds the limit, the child turns 13, a full-time Member becomes a part-time Member, or a Member leaves program);
- new or existing Members become eligible for child care benefits;
- a Member wishes to change child care providers/programs or a child care provider/program will no longer provide child care services; or
- a Member is absent from the program for excessive periods of time (five or more days in a month).

Costs incurred due to the Grantee's failure to keep AmeriCorps®CARE immediately informed of changes in a Member's status may be charged to the Grantee's organization. AmeriCorps®CARE will not be held responsible for payments made to ineligible Members.

In order to assist Program Directors in this process, an updated list of Members receiving child care benefits in your program will be sent to you monthly. You are required to review this list, make any corrections (i.e.: change of status not yet reported, correction of projected end date, change of income eligibility, and other factors affecting costs or coverage) and return it to AmeriCorps®CARE within 3 working days. This does not remove the responsibility from Program Directors to report such changes as they occur, however. These lists will assist in the verification and documentation of these changes.

Can part-time Members get child care benefits?

Although no portion of child care expenses for part-time Members may be paid from Corporation funds, programs may choose to provide child care to part-time Members from other sources. (Part-time AmeriCorps Members are defined as Members serving 900 hours during a period of not more than two years, or three years if enrolled in an institution of higher education while serving.)

Part-time Members may be eligible for child care subsidies available through state-administered child care assistance programs. Various State child care programs are also available to families who are on AFDC, “at risk” of going on AFDC, or losing AFDC due to the AmeriCorps living allowance. AmeriCorps Member eligibility does not guarantee availability of child care assistance in any particular state. Local agencies such as the child care resource and referral agency in your area can help part-time Members research information about these programs. You also may want to contact the state’s child care coordinator (usually housed in the State Department of Education, Social Services, Human Services, Social Insurance, or similar agency).

With Corporation approval, part-time Members serving full-time hours for a sustained period of time (i.e.: a summer) may receive child care benefits through AmeriCorps®CARE, but such exceptions must be approved in the grant budget. A program that needs such an exemption should submit a request through their parent organization or State Commission, if applicable, for review by the Corporation. Programs should not assume that this exemption is available until they receive written approval from the Corporation.

I. Other Support Service Requirements

What educational support services must we provide to Members?

For Members who are school dropouts, programs must provide support services to help them get a high school diploma or GED certificate before exiting the program.

Programs also may want to provide college readiness programs for Members going on to higher education. Both high school/GED programs and college readiness programs can be integrated effectively with service learning curricula. Members must have their GEDs, or have obtained a waiver, to access their educational awards.

What written assurance must we obtain from Members without GEDs or high school diplomas?

If a Member is a high school dropout, he or she must agree in writing before enrolling in the program to obtain a high school diploma or GED certificate while enrolled in the program, unless the program has conducted an educational assessment with indicates that the Member is incapable of obtaining a high school diploma or its equivalent. The grant provisions and the regulations (45 C.F.R. §2522.200) list exceptions to this requirement.

Are AmeriCorps programs required to provide job referrals to AmeriCorps Members at the end of their term of service?

No, however many programs feel a responsibility to work with their AmeriCorps Members throughout the year and especially toward the end of the term of service on advancing Members' career and educational goals. Activities can range from offering assistance with resume writing and preparation of college applications, to working with local employers to arrange job interviews or job placements.

J. The Educational Award

How do Members qualify for an educational award?

Detailed information on the educational awards and student loan forbearance will be sent to program directors. In short, the educational benefits are provided from a special account in the United States Treasury called the National Service Trust. To qualify for an educational award, Members must complete the required "term of service" successfully. The award for full time service (a minimum of 1,700 hours over a period of 9 to 12 months) is \$4,725; the award for part-time service (a minimum of 900 hours) is \$2,362.50.

Members may receive up to two awards. Both awards may be for part-time, full-time, or special terms of service, or they can be for two different types of terms. While Members may complete more than two terms of service, they can receive awards only for the first two terms.

Prorated educational awards may be given if a Member has been released for compelling personal circumstances and has served at least 15% of the term of service.

How can the educational awards be used?

Educational awards can be used to pay back qualified student loans and to pay for the cost of attending a qualified institution of higher education or the expenses incurred in participating in an approved school-to-work program. The payment will be made to the school, program, or loan holder designated by the Member and not to the AmeriCorps Member. Schools, however, may reimburse students for certain expenses they paid for out-of-pocket. Members can split up their awards to pay a combination of student loans and/or educational expenses. Members have 7 years from the end of their term of service to use the awards.

How do we make sure that our Members get educational awards?

You and your Members must complete a National Service Change of Status/Term Form at the time of enrollment and an "End of Term of Service" form upon the completion of service. These must be mailed promptly to the National Service Trust at the Corporation for National Service. Since an educational award cannot be made until we get verification that a Member has completed service, it is especially important that the National Service Change of Status/Term Form be sent to the Trust immediately upon the completion of service.

Within two weeks of receiving the "End of Term" form, a voucher will be mailed to the Member, along with a set of instructions on how to proceed. The Member will fill out a portion of the voucher and submit it to the institution. The institution will complete another section and will send it to the National Service Trust for payment. The payment will be made to the institution and a notice will be sent to the Member, along with a new voucher reflecting any balance in the Member's educational award account.

K. Postponing Loan Repayments during Service**Can Members have their loan repayments postponed while they are serving?**

Yes, for many student loans. Members are entitled to receive "forbearance"—one type of postponement—on the repayment of qualified student loans. These loans are the same types of loans which Members can repay using their educational awards. Programs will receive more detailed information that will specify the loans that are "qualified student loans," but generally speaking, they are student loans backed by the Federal government.

If a qualified student loan is in default, the loan company may not be required to grant forbearance.

When a Member receives an educational award, the National Service Trust will pay the interest that accrues on their qualified student loan during the Member's national service forbearance period. This is true both for prorated and full awards. This benefit is above and beyond the educational award: the interest payment will not be deducted from the amount of the award.

How can I help Members get forbearance for their qualified student loans?

Members must request forbearance from their loan holders. They can do this by completing a National Service Forbearance Request Form for each loan holder and sending it to the Trust in Washington, D.C. The Trust will certify the Member's participation and forward the form to the loan company. These forms will be made available to all AmeriCorps programs. Some loan holders may want a Member to complete their own paperwork for requesting forbearance. The Member should do so, then forward the documents to the Trust, where their participation will be certified and the forms returned to the loan company.

Enrollment forms must be sent to the Trust as soon as possible after the individual becomes an AmeriCorps Member because The Trust can verify membership only if proof of enrollment has been received.

How can I help Members get the interest paid at the end of their service?

End of Term of Service forms must be sent to the Trust as soon as the Member ends his or her service. The Trust is unable to make an interest payment until it has proof that the Member has completed service and has earned an award.

Towards the end of service, Members should request a bill or statement showing the total amount of interest that has accrued (or will accrue) during their national service forbearance period from the loan servicer. This request can be made either over the phone (most loan servicers have toll-free numbers) or by sending the loan company a form requesting the interest amount. A form for making this request will be made available to programs in the fall of 1995.

The bill or statement should contain the interest rate, the total amount of interest that accrued, and the dates upon which this figure is based (the beginning and ending dates of their forbearance period). If it is more convenient, the loan company may include just the daily interest amount. Members must send that document to the Trust for payment. The Trust will notify Members once the payment has been made.

VI. The Basics of the Financial Management System

A. Fundamentals

What are the basics of a good financial management system?

To build a good financial management system, programs must use standard accounting practices with general ledgers and similar books of record, supported by source documentation which establishes a clear audit trail. The financial reports must lead back to the ledgers and source documents clearly. Programs must document the Member hours through time and attendance records. You must have individual time distribution records for your staff which allow you to identify and segregate costs chargeable to the grant. Grantees must segregate the financial duties in the office to the extent possible (for example, having one person sign the checks and another reconcile the bank statement). The organization must track specifically all property purchased with Federal funds.

What financial documentation must we keep?

The organization must document every cost that is charged to the grant. For example, programs must keep signed time and attendance records for every individual employee and AmeriCorps Member. You must keep source documentation for other costs, such as receipts, travel vouchers, invoices, bills, or affidavits. Grantees must document volunteer costs and you also must document all in-kind and other matching contributions.

How long must we keep grant records?

You must keep all records for a period of three years from the date of submission of the final financial report.

What written policies must we maintain?

Grantees must have written policies relating to cost allocation, salary scales, fringe benefits, travel reimbursement, and personnel policies (including a Member code of conduct). These policies must be consistent with the grant and applied consistently throughout the organization.

B. Requirements

Are there any special rules for managing AmeriCorps grant funds?

The grant award and its provisions contain all the details and specifics governing the management of your grant. Your organization's financial officer and accountant should be familiar with the more esoteric, detailed financial and management requirements contained in the grant and the incorporated OMB (Office of Management and Budget) Circulars.

In order to effectively manage and implement your program , you, as program director, need to be familiar with the principle requirements applicable to the AmeriCorps program, such as Member recruitment, training, prohibitions on lobbying, terms of service, minimum hours, etc. In addition you should be familiar with the special limitations on use of funds that apply to AmeriCorps such as the 5% limitation on administrative funds and prohibition on using budgeted Member allowances and benefit funds for other program activities and expenses. All of these requirements are specifically detailed in the AmeriCorps provisions in your grant.

What are the OMB Circulars?

The OMB circulars cited in your grant address all the details and specifics governing the management of a Federal grant. These circulars will be mailed directly to your program's organization. If your organization has had other Federal grants, then your organization should already be familiar with the content. If not, your organization needs to familiarize itself with the grant. If you have any questions, contact the grants officer assigned in your grant.

You should note that any provisions in the grant which specifically apply to AmeriCorps take precedence over any conflicting provisions in the OMB Circulars.

What if we don't meet OMB standards?

If your organization does not comply with the grant provisions and OMB requirements, costs that have been charged to the grant can be questioned or disallowed following an audit. If a program's financial management system is seriously inadequate, the granting agency or the Corporation can stop making advance grant payments, suspend funds, terminate the grant, recover funds, or take other legal steps.

Some of the most common problems are:

- inadequate accounting practices
- poor internal controls
- inadequate documentation and record-keeping
- inaccurate financial status reports
- failure to return interest on Federal grant funds

When is a cost allowable under the grant?

In general, a cost is allowable if it meets the following criteria:

- It is reasonable for the performance of the grant award.
- It conforms to the limitations and exclusions in the award as to types or amounts of cost items.
- It is consistent with the policies and procedures of the grantee organization.
- It is accorded consistent treatment.
- It is documented adequately.

C. Audit Requirements

Is an audit of my grant required?

Yes. All organizations receiving in excess of \$25,000 Federal funds must have an independent audit conducted not less frequently than every two years. In addition, the Corporation may choose to do an audit of your organization or a follow-up to your independent audit. The Inspector General may also independently audit selected programs.

What is an A-133 Audit?

If you receive more than \$100,000 and more than one Federal grant, you must have an audit of the entire organization conducted according to the requirements of OMB Circular A-133. Essentially, the independent auditor must:

- 1) determine if financial statements present the program's financial position fairly;
- 2) determine if the institution has the internal control structure to ensure that the program is managing the award according to the applicable Federal laws and regulations; and
- 3) determine that the program has complied with the applicable laws and regulations that may have a direct and material effect on the programs financial statement.

D. Matching Fund Requirements

What are the cost matching requirements for AmeriCorps programs?

You are responsible for meeting the matching amounts in your negotiated grant award and budget. This amount based on your proposal may exceed the minimum matches required.

Following is a summary of the minimum required matches:

- Total Operating Costs (with a minimum match of 25%)
Which include: Staff, Program Management, Member Related Costs (Training and Education, Uniforms, etc.), Internal Evaluation, and Administration.
- Member Support Costs (with a minimum match of 15%)
Which include: Living Allowance, FICA, Worker's Compensation, and Health Care.

The Member cost match of 15% requires the use of non-Federal funds, with the exception of health benefits and 638 funds.

VII. Grant Payments

How will we get our grant funds?

To transfer money directly to State Commissions, National parent organizations, and Set Aside grantees, the Corporation uses a system called SmartLink, managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This system allows the State Commissions and National organizations to access and request funds electronically and have money deposited into their accounts in one day. The Corporation allows them to draw funds in advance of expenditures. However, they must only keep an amount of cash on hand to meet immediate expenses.

State Commissions and National Direct parent organizations must use their own systems to distribute funds to subgrants. These systems vary based on state and organizational capability. They may provide advances or working capital advances with subsequent reimbursement of actual expenses.

To be eligible for advances, an organization, whether a direct grantee of the Corporation or a sub-grantee, must be determined to be financially responsible.

VIII. Changes in the Grant

Do we need prior approval for changes that do not involve the budget?

Yes. You must obtain written approval for significant program changes to the grant. Write your State Commission if you are an AmeriCorps*State grantee. Write the Corporation if you are an AmeriCorps*National or AmeriCorps*Set Aside grantee.

What are some examples of program changes that require prior written approval of the granting agency?

- Changes in the scope or goals of the program.
- The extended absence of the program director or any other key designated official.
- The appointment of a new program director.
- Changes in the start and end dates of a grant.
- Increasing the number of Members beyond the maximum.
- Decisions to sub-grant or sub-contract out program activities not previously contemplated or approved.

Can we use unused funds budgeted for living allowances and benefits?

No. These costs include living allowances, FICA, worker's compensation and health care. These costs are directly related to the number of Members that you agreed to enroll. If you fail to meet its enrollment target or if Members drop out, you cannot use the funds to pay for other costs.

What are some examples of budgetary and organizational changes that require the prior approval of the Corporation?

- The reallocation of funds from any of the line items included in the "Other Member Support Costs" category, including living allowance, FICA, Worker's Compensation, health care and alternative health care.
- The transfer of funds allotted for training allowances.
- Significant reductions in the match commitment.
- Purchases of equipment over \$5,000 unless specified in the grant award budget.
- The sale of products with the AmeriCorps logo on them.
- The transfer of the grant or sub-grant to a different organization.

IX. Program Monitoring

A. Reporting Requirements

What are the basic reporting requirements?

Programs must file reports according to their grant provisions. These include periodic programmatic narrative reports, annual and final reports, and quarterly financial status reports. State Commissions and parent organizations must file for their local programs and sites.

In the spirit of "reinventing government," the Corporation continually strives to streamline the paperwork we require of our grantees. To this end, in the '95-'96 program year the Corporation has eliminated quarterly programmatic narrative reports and will require only two major reports. Financial reports must be submitted four times a year.

What is the annual report?

The annual report is a report that summarizes the year of activities under the program and reports on the program's expenditures against the budget line items in the grant award, including Corporation dollars and the program match.

B. Site Visits

Will representatives from my State Commission or the parent organization of my national direct program conduct site visits to my program/project site?

Yes. AmeriCorps*State programs should expect site visits from the staff and possibly even members of your State Commission. AmeriCorps*National project sites should expect site visits from the staff of your parent organization.

Will Corporation Staff conduct site visits to my program/project site?

Yes. Corporation Staff will make every effort to conduct site visits to program/project sites. They will be coordinated with, and in most cases organized by, State Commissions for AmeriCorps*State programs, parent organizations for AmeriCorps*National project sites, and Program Officers for AmeriCorps*Set Aside programs.

What is the purpose of a site visit?

Site visits allow us to learn more about a program's service activities and community partnerships; to hear success stories of AmeriCorps programs; to ensure compliance with Corporation and State regulations, policies, and grant provisions; to monitor the progress of a program towards meeting its objectives; and, perhaps most important, to provide technical assistance to improve the quality of AmeriCorps programs.

X. Fund Raising Assistance

How does the Corporation support our fundraising efforts?

To help AmeriCorps programs foster new locally-based partnerships, the Corporation's Office of Public Liaison is engaged in national outreach and education activities designed to inform potential corporate and foundation donors about AmeriCorps. This outreach includes presentations at national and regional conferences, writing articles, and convening groups of national business and foundation leaders. The Corporation's primary message is to encourage donors to form partnerships directly with local AmeriCorps programs.

What training resources are available to assist us?

The Corporation's Training and TA Department will offer a series of fundraising workshops throughout the year to help build the fundraising capacity of local AmeriCorps programs. The Private Sector Office has also developed materials such as The National Service Resource Guide: Strategies for Building a Diversified Funding Base (excerpts of this publication appear in the appendix of this binder) to help AmeriCorps programs enhance their fundraising.

Should we identify ourselves as AmeriCorps programs when fundraising and building community partnerships?

All AmeriCorps grantees are part of the AmeriCorps National Service Network and may identify themselves as AmeriCorps programs for the purpose of soliciting funds or in-kind assistance. At the national level our goal is to make sure that potential donors are familiar with AmeriCorps prior to your request.

Does the Corporation want to know about our fundraising successes and challenges?

Yes, the Corporation wants to learn from and share your models for building successful partnerships with other programs and find ways to help you address AmeriCorps specific fundraising challenges. In addition, the Corporation looks closely at trends in national AmeriCorps funding to see where additional outreach and educational efforts might be targeted. Please share your stories with the Office of Private Sector Liaison and your program officer.

Please see the appendix for additional materials.

XI. Accessing the Corporation's Resources

Does the Corporation provide any training or technical assistance to the programs?

The Corporation has contracted with over twenty national training and technical assistance (T/TA) providers to help meet programs' training and technical assistance needs. To maximize the impact of this investment, the Corporation follows a "train the trainer" approach and does not train Members directly. Enclosed in this binder is a roster of T/TA providers that includes specific information on available services as well as instructions on how to access the services. The services include: workshops, conferences and seminars; on-site T/TA; telephone and e-mail assistance; development and distribution of written material; and facilitation of peer exchanges. Additional training and technical assistance is provided to programs by the State Commissions.

Regular assessment of T/TA needs is an essential part of operating an effective program. For this reason requests for technical assistance are included in the regular reporting processes required by the Corporation which pass from the program to the legal grantee -- the Commission or National direct main office -- and to the Corporation. Nonetheless, requests for TA can be made at any time by submitting a TA request form or by telephoning a TA provider directly. **It is the responsibility of the provider and/or the Corporation's Program Office or Technical Assistance Program Officer to keep the legal grantee informed about all TA requests made directly to the provider or to the Corporation.**

How do programs access T/TA Workshops and Conferences?

You will receive information and schedules from TA providers. Once you receive mailings inviting you to workshops conducted by national providers, you may call or mail in your registrations directly. You will also receive information on accessing Telephone TA from providers.

Are on-site consultations available?

Yes, but on-site consultations are the most expensive form of technical assistance. The important thing to understand about requests of this kind is that every request for on-site assistance will be reviewed by the State Commission or National Direct parent organization or by the appropriate Corporation Official, and by the Corporation TA staff before funding decisions are made. Requests for on-site assistance can be made in the T/TA Request section of the Quarterly Reports, or by contacting a T/TA provider directly by telephone.